

✓
A

LETTER

TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

ON THE SUBJECT

OF HIS LATE PUBLICATION.

By GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B. A.

LATE FELLOW OF JESUS-COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Beware of false prophets!—Ye shall know them by their
fruits. JESUS.

Ye blind guides! which strain out a gnat, and swallow a
camel. IDEM.

—— Nefas illic fetum jugulare capellæ;
Carnibus humanis vesci licet.—In mare nemo
Hunc abicit, sævâ dignum verâque Charybdi? —
Tam vacui capitis populum Phæaca putavit?
JUVENAL.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY A. HAMILTON;
AND SOLD BY G. KEARSLEY, FLEET-STREET.

1797.

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

1852-1853

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

WILLIAM L. GILBERT

A
LETTER

TO
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

SIR!

THE privilege, which you have claimed and employed, of addressing “the higher and middle classes of this country” on the religious system “of professed Christians, contrasted with real Christianity,” cannot be grudged with consistency, in application to yourself, from one, according to the vulgar acceptance of those words, neither in the *high* nor *middle* class, but in the very *lowest order* of the community, in which we live. Your attention to religious subjects, in the midst of a corrupt and faithless generation, is regarded with more honour and approbation by none of your warmest friends than by your opponent: nor, I believe, have your thoughts, since we were contemporaries once

B

at

at Cambridge, and before that period, been more intensely occupied in the same speculations and pursuits, than mine. Our conclusions, however, from these diligent researches prove not only different, but totally contradictory: yet, (for I am disposed to pay no futile compliments and to sacrifice no self-applause, at the expence of conviction and sincerity, though ready to concede in your favour all that can possibly be true) I presume your purposes and affections to have been equally pure, equally zealous, and equally dispassionate, with my own. Perhaps, in consequence of your elaborate publication, which, from the peculiar situation and character of it's author, is likely to engage a considerable portion of popular notice, it may be a circumstance not altogether unimportant to some of our fellow-citizens, nor absolutely unworthy of your own regard, to contemplate some prominent particulars of our disagreement, and the grounds on which we differ.

But, Sir! my leading motive to this public and free address had it's origin in that countenance, which the favourable opinion of
your

your character, very generally entertained, as a sincere and pious Christian, has reflected on the political conduct of those statesmen, whose views you have promoted with eagerness and constancy; and whose interests you have interwoven with your own. It becomes therefore, I am persuaded, a consideration of some moment to Englishmen at large, to be supplied with some measure of determination, whether one, thus sanctified in the estimation of his countrymen,—thus assuming the dignified office of a religious censor in society,—be indeed entitled to this large tribute of admiration, and illuminated with that knowledge of his subject, which has a claim to ensure his precepts a reverend acceptation with his disciples. That reasonable postulat-um too, I apprehend, is no less pertinent to the subject of Christianity, than to topics of philology and taste; founded on a requisite alliance between magisterial animadversion and personal accomplishment:

Let such teach others, who themselves excell;
And censure freely, who have written well.]

It was my primary intention to examine your publication in detail; but this object I

soon abandoned, as tedious, from the prolixity of your effusions ; as unprofitable, from their wildness ; as impracticable, from their indistinction. Your fundamental principles are, in my judgement, so essentially erroneous, your whole conception of the gospel so absolutely incompatible with the undisputed conduct and with the unequivocal dictates of CHRIST himself, as to render such a specific discussion of your sentiments an undertaking of inextricable and hopeless perplexity. Every avenue to conviction, by which such arguments, as have been deemed effectual with rational enquirers, might be expected to approach, is obstructed by fantastical prepossessions, by visionary feelings, by an experimental perception of truth, not explicable on the known elements of vulgar reasoning, and only intelligible to the happy illuminated devotee ;

ΦΩΝΑΝΤΑ ΣΥΝΕΤΟΙΣΙΝ ΕΣ

ΔΕ ΤΟ ΠΑΝ, ΕΡΜΗΝΕΩΝ

ΧΑΤΙΖΕΙ—.

Your ear alone the mystic sounds can gain :
Plebeians listen still, and still, in vain.

Among this *vulgar herd* of unenlightened sluggish catechumens I profess my name also. Suffer us, therefore, in the prosecution of
this

this subject, to adopt a method of argumentation better suited to our scantier knowledge and our gross conceptions: and, if we prove at once mistaken and presumptuous, let your superior illuminations interpose, to repress our arrogance, and confute our errors.

I. My first object, then, shall be an attempt to delineate some striking features of genuine Christianity, according to my notion of that pure, sublime, and simple institution: not by a deduction from imaginary theories, but from indisputable premises; namely, 1. The *conduct* and *character* of our Saviour himself: and, 2. From his *precepts*. At this equitable arbitration, yourself, I trust, will feel no inclination to demur. II. I shall take the liberty of bringing the question home to your own “life and bosom.” I shall venture to examine your public conduct in the crucible of these criterions: well aware at the same time, from the multiplicity and critical nature of the topics, which so comprehensive an excursion will involve, of the delicacy and danger of this project from the baffled malignity of a despairing and flagitious faction; who have riveted their power against the public voice
by

by the most extensive bribery, and are prepared to hazard their own lives with the fortunes of royalty and the constitution in an attempt at military despotism.

Οὐ ψευδεὶς τεγξω

Λογον. Διαπειρα τοι

Βροτων ελεγχος.

I. i. I shall attempt a delineation of the sincere Christian gospel by a few capital strokes from the practice of our Lord.

You will readily allow me, that his example is propounded in the scriptures as a model of imitation for all his followers. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me :* (Mat. xi. 29.) *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus :* (Philipp. ii. 5.) *Christ also suffered for us ; leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps :* (1 Pet. ii. 21.) *He, that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked :* (1 John, ii. 6.) We conclude, then, from these explicit declarations, that, in the proportion of our approximation to the life of Christ, will our advances be towards the transcendental excellence of evangelical perfection. Indeed, one previous proposition, not applicable to himself, must be presumed

presumed with relation to his disciples, as the passport to *life eternal*; (John, xvii. 3.) that, in addition to a common belief of one true God, his brethren acknowledge himself also to be the *anointed servant* of Jehovah, (Acts, iv. 27.) the long-expected Messiah of the Jews, (John, iv. 25, 26.) *who died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day,* (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.) that he might *deliver us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God*: (Rom. viii. 21.) With this single exception only, the life of Christ must be regarded by us as a complete exemplar for the zealous emulation of his votaries.

Now, a most comprehensive summary of our Lord's practical virtues is exhibited in this short, but emphatic, sentence of his apostle Peter; (Acts, x. 38.) *Who went about, DOING GOOD.*

If some of our modern fanatics have conceived accurately of gospel-truth, the epitome of our Saviour's excellence should have been circumscribed by different lines of character; by a copious display of *comfortable illuminations,*

tions, powerful conversions, secret influences, lookings unto God, or some equivalent impressions ; provided only, that the things themselves were equally unintelligible and undefinable : the wild phantoms of despicable ignorance, and besotted superstition. No : the sublime representation is depicted in full beauty, and in matchless proportion, by five words only of simplicity and soberness : HE WENT ABOUT, DOING GOOD. The relief of human misery in all it's varieties and complications of distress, the reformation of the vicious, the instruction of the ignorant, the confirmation of the virtuous, the consolation of the meek, the encouragement of the docile, the generous and indignant reprobation of demure hypocrisy ; — these godlike purposes, as the sole means of personal happiness, by fulfilling the will of *his Father* and *our Father*, of *his God* and *our God*, (John, xx. 17.) through active benevolence to the workmanship of the Creator, was the grand rule of conduct to the Man of Nazareth ; was the sole occupation of his thoughts, the unceasing employment of his time, the devoted purpose of his life. Hear his divine declarations on this point. *My meat is to do the will of him*

that sent me, and to finish his work: (John, iv. 34.) I was daily with you in the temple teaching: (Luke, xiv. 49.) To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth: (John, xviii. 37.) To him *positive beneficence*, and *positive beneficence* alone, invigorated and incited by pure principles of action, was the test of merit, and the genuine characteristic of Christian sanctity. *Feelings*, and *visions*, and *experiences*, and inexplicable *grace*, unaccompanied by services to men, and unauthenticated by such services, is a vile jargon, unknown to the Saviour of mankind, and unrecorded in the oracles of truth. The Gospel abhors appearances without realities; it knows no faith as a meritorious operation of the heart or intellect, but the faith exemplified and substantiated by the vitality of works. We are commanded to raise upon our *faith* a noble superstructure of *virtue*, *knowledge*, *temperance*, *patience*, *godliness*, *brotherly kindness*, *charity*; (2 Pet. i. 5—8.) if we wish to prove ourselves the followers and *friends* of Christ, (John, xv. 4.) not in *word* only, but in *deed* and in *truth*. The virtues and graces of the gospel, like those of its

C
illustrious

illustrious founder, are activity and exercise; not torpid influences, and indolent sensations; no stagnant pool of devotional mummeries, of insipid mysticism, that cumbers the ground, and pollutes the atmosphere; but a salubrious expansion of *living waters*, dispersing health, animation, and fertility, through the earth; and *springing up into everlasting life*: (John, iv. 10. 14.)

2. But in the *precepts* of our Lord we shall find a more circumstantial configuration of the Christian character; and, if possible, scarcely a less interesting and important picture, than in his life: a life, publicly displayed on the theatre of human action, but a mere particle of time.

Ostendunt terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
Esse sinunt. Nimium vobis Romana propago
Visa potens, Superi! propria hæc si dona fuissent.

1. For the first instance of the moral institutions of the Gospel, Jesus hath there taught us the *perfectibility* of human nature, beyond any assignable limits of progressive virtue. This sublime doctrine, which the unlearned arrogance of modern philosophy

has

has usurped as it's own discovery, though it stood on record as so clearly promulgated eighteen centuries ago by the carpenter's son of Galilee, is laid down with unquestionable precision in the following comprehensive exhortation : *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect* : (Matt. v. 48.) The same inference is deducible from a parallel injunction of the apostle Paul, with equal clearness ; an injunction, founded on our intellectual resemblance to the universal parent of our race. *Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children* : (Eph. v. 1.) To this effect also will amount by reasonable inference that admonitory invitation of the writer to the Hebrews : *Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection* : (vi. 1.)

By these perspicuous positions are decidedly confuted those frivolous and profligate maxims of some modern advocates for corruption in ecclesiastical and political establishments, who endeavour to reconcile the credulous, the timid, and unreflecting, to their abject systems, upon this ignominious pretence ; That the generality of mankind has

always been, and always must continue, depraved and ignorant: that we, extravagant reformers, indulge a vain theory, when we expatiate on the practicability of a form of government and a general constitution of civil discipline, which shall meliorate, beyond all competition with our degraded condition at this moment, the moral and intellectual character of the species: which shall exalt the denizens of this terrestrial habitation to a spiritualised state of purity *little lower than the angels*: (Heb. ii. 9.) Unless, however, the signs of the time deceive me, these days of *restitution and refreshment*, after so calamitous a period of supine ignorance, thralldom, and debasement of all that is noble and generous in man, have commenced their glorious career with rapid strides, and are marching with an acceleration, that no tyranny can impede, from their goal in our vicinity, to the precincts of the universe.

ferrea primum

Definit, ac toto surgit gens aurea mundo.

2. *Peace and reconciliation*, in their most extensive import, whether of man to God or to his brother; universal and unbounded love,

not circumscribed by incidental limitations of country or opinion ; — these endearing principles are inculcated in every page of the Gospel, with affectionate solicitude and unwearied importunity. *Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you ;* (John, xiv. 27.) was among the last admonitions of our most amiable master, (*who spake as never man spake ;* John, vii. 46.) to his disconsolate disciples before that consummation of magnanimity and benevolence, his voluntary suspension on the cross. But it were superfluous to investigate through the scriptures of the New Testament a multitude of texts in corroboration of this acknowledged doctrine of Christianity, whose herald was THE PRINCE OF PEACE : (Isaiah, ix. 6.) All those precepts of mutual forbearance, exhibited under such impressive figures and emphatical phraseology from Matthew, v. 38—48. which exceed, in native sublimity and simple elegance, the moral lessons of every other sage and instructor, in whatever time or country, among the most accomplished nations of antiquity, beyond all pretensions of comparison ; those precepts, I say, directly and explicitly infer PACIFIC PRINCIPLES, universal and unqualified,

lified, to be an essential constitution of Christianity. There is one passage, however, so eminently pertinent and impressive, of such awful denunciation against the man of blood, that I should be inexcusable for withholding it from my readers on this occasion.

And behold, Simon Peter stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and smote the high-priest's servant, and cut off his ear. Then said Jesus unto Peter: Put up thy sword into it's place. The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? ALL THEY THAT TAKE THE SWORD, SHALL PERISH BY THE SWORD: (Matt. xxvi. 51, 52. John, xviii. 10, 11.)

But we shall have an opportunity of dwelling more particularly on this topic in the sequel; and I therefore only observe in passing, what delectable Christians they must be, and what a precious Christianity they must profess, who can in any possible manner or degree, under any supposable circumstances whatsoever, co-operate with the military executions of WAR and MURDER on their species!

Ἀφρητῶρ, ἀθεμιστός, ἀνεστῖος, ἐστὶν ἐκείνός,

Ὁς πολεμᾷ ἐράται. — HOMER, Il. ix. 63.

Curs'd is the man, and void of law and right,
Unworthy property, unworthy light,
Unfit for public rule, or private care,
That WRETCH, that MONSTER, WHO DELIGHTS
IN WAR:

Whose lust is MURDER, and whose horrid joy,
To TEAR HIS COUNTRY, AND HIS KIND DESTROY.

POPE.

“ Oh ! my soul, come not thou into their
“ secret : unto their assembly, mine honour !
“ be not thou united ! Woe is me, that I
“ sojourn in Mesech ; that I dwell in the
“ tents of Kedar ! My soul hath long dwelt
“ with him that hateth peace. I am for
“ peace : but, when I speak, they are for
“ war :” (Gen. xlix. 6. Psalm, cxx. 5, 6.)

3. After a conscientious performance of our duty, after a life in the main conformable to the dictates of the Gospel, and habitually devoted to the will of God, the precepts of Christ authorise a degree of manly confidence in the goodness and promises of our divine master ; notwithstanding some occasional violations of our purpose ; some transient deviations

ations from a general rectitude of course. These irregularities are too frequent, alas ! and too flagrant with the most circumspect among us in the present flagitious constitution of society, and amidst the enormous depravities of civil governments : under an untowardness of circumstances, that leaves but a simple possibility for the lowest orders of the people to emerge from the abject condition of beasts of burden ; whilst their intellectual and moral capacities are neglected, debased, and prostituted, to the vile projects of their taskmasters, and their natural and religious privileges are trampled in the dust. In this view *eternal life* is stipulated to us on a performance of *the commandments*, and a proportionate communication of our substance, after our ability, to the necessities of our poorer brethren : (Matt. xix. 16—22.) *To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God,* (Micah, vi. 8.) is all that is *required* of us by *the Lord* ; is made a sure condition of his present favour and future recompence. *Him, that cometh to me,* says our Master himself, *I will in no wise cast out :* (John, vi. 37.) From these and a copious variety of other passages, which it were superfluous to collect, or enumerate,

merate, for readers conversant in the scriptures, to whom alone our appeal is made, this conclusion is abundantly deducible: That, though we are, indeed, in the scriptural expression, *unprofitable servants*, (Luke, xvii. 10.) of no supposeable benefit to our master; without any previous and original claim on his bounty; indebted to his mercies for our life, our faculties, our opportunities, and all our enjoyments: still, as he was graciously pleased to receive us into covenant, and has engaged his protection and reward by certain stipulations proposed on his part and performed on our's; — since, moreover, the very essence of his nature is spontaneous beneficence, and a fatherly affection to the creatures of his hand; — since we are persuaded, on the surest grounds of conviction, from reason and from revelation, that he will not be *extreme to mark what is done amiss*: upon these principles, I say, men, whose conduct has been generally irreproachable and under the guidance of Gospel principles, may look up with assurance to their Maker, and expect remuneration at his hands. To form a different conclusion from this, is to change the benevolent parent of mankind into a harsh exactor of his dues,

reaping where he did not sow, and gathering where he had not scattered ; (Matt. xxv. 24.) is to transform our divine master into an inconsistent and delusive mocker of expectation ; invests him with qualities, which would render even a fellow-creature odious in our eyes ; converts, in short, the whole Gospel into a system of absurdity and contradiction, and belies our primary, unalterable, and clear perceptions of truth and justice. What are we to think, then, of that despicable cant, that hypocritical humility, of some modern religionists, which leads them to speak of themselves, after a life conscientiously devoted, according to their own views of scripture, to the will of God, as the most vile and abandoned of sinners ? Yet this, Sir ! is the *whining piety*, the slavish superstition, of yourself and your adherents. *But we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption ; whereby we cry, Abba, Father ! (Rom. viii. 15.)* There is no *fear* (1 John, iv. 18.) in the true believer : he acquiesces in humble confidence, and with more than trembling hopes, knowing that what God has promised, he will perform ; in a holy composure of spirit, patient,

patient, tranquil, and resigned ; not with the terrors of a *servant*, but with the assurance of a *son*, and a *joint-heir with Christ*, (Gal. iv. 7. Rom. viii. 17.) that he shall finally lay hold on eternal life. Paul indeed stiled himself *the chief of sinners* ; (1 Tim. i. 15.) And well he might : for he had *persecuted, bound, and imprisoned*, with blind zeal and unrelenting rancour, his fellow-countrymen, for a mere difference of opinion, for presuming to employ the privilege of rationality in judging and acting for themselves : nay, more ; he had glutted his eyes, and defiled his hands, with the dying agonies and the righteous blood of the proto-martyr Stephen ! (Acts, vii. 58. xxii. 20. xxvi. 10, 11.) Surely, surely, WILLIAM PITT, with his sanguinary fraternity, whom you *love*, Mr. Wilberforce ! and his administration, which you *support*, and are become in consequence a partaker of their monstrous guilt ;—surely you *regular* statesmen will be numbered with the last perpetrators of such unspeakable atrocities, such inexpressible crimes, as these !!! *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?* (Rev. vi. 10.)

4. Though I am not solicitous to specify every characteristic doctrine of Christianity, or aim at the difficult attempt of illustrating all it's excellencies, with a circumstantial copiousness unnecessary on this occasion; yet in addressing you, Sir! it will in no wise be impertinent to observe, that the religion of Jesus is a system, not of *ceremonies*, but of *services*. Anxious scruples, (Matt. xxiii. 23. 25.) ostentatious formalities, (verr. 5. 14. 28.) demure grimace, (vi. 16.) *long babbling prayers*, and indeed all but *private prayers*, (ver. 5—9.) fastings, and similar austerities, are discountenanced, or condemned, by express declarations of the Gospel. Such formalities, in fact, are wholly inconsistent with a genuine profession of our religion in *spirit* and in *truth*; (John, iv. 23, 24.) with this sublime refined scheme of mental devotion and internal purity. Our devotional constitution of soul, our silent principle of duty, is neither invigorated nor improved by the inspection *of man, who looketh on the outward appearance only*, but by the eye of Him, *who looketh on the heart*: (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) As far as we find our affections warmed and our practice benefited by ritual performances, we are furnished

nished with a criterion of our imperfect advances in the true Christian character, and our inadequate conceptions of the powers of the Gospel. Ceremonies and positive observances are the *milk* suited to *babes* in Christ : (Heb. v. 12, 13.) When we are arrived at the *full stature* of perfect manhood, (Eph. iv. 13.) when our senses, from exercise and experience, shall be able to *discern between good and evil* ; we may expect to relish the *strong meat* of Christianity, and shall *put away these childish things* : (Heb. v. 14. 1 Cor. xiii. 11.)

5. Ecclesiastical oppression, religious impositions, persecutions, and Tyranny, in all the shapes of that horrid fiend, are diametrically opposite to the liberal spirit of the Christian discipline, and are most expressly and energetically condemned by it. No modes of conviction, beyond the gentle process of calm persuasion and rational appeal, are authorised by the gospel of Jesus Christ. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear* ; (Matt. xiii. 9.) was the uniform maxim of the generous founder of our religion. He allowed no *masters*, no *rabbis*, no *fathers upon earth* ; (Matt. xxiii. 7—11.) no lordly interferences
of

of councils or fynods, of emperors or popes, of parliaments or prelates, or even royal *defenders of the faith*! with his supreme and sole authority in his spiritual dominion over the minds and consciences of his subjects. Every species of church establishment, all human formularies of religious doctrine, all compulsory subscriptions to creeds, and articles, and canons, that contemptible trumpery of ignorant, lazy, mercenary, and impudent ecclesiastics! are a direct profanation of the sanctity of the Gospel, a profligate usurpation on the unalienable rights of private judgement, and an audacious rebellion against the sovereignty of the sole commissioned legislator of Jehovah. *No foundation can any man lay, beyond what is already laid, Jesus the Christ: (1 Cor. iii. 11.)* Neither gold, nor silver, nor precious stones, and much less those baser materials of *wood, hay, and stubble*, laid on this foundation by slavish churchmen, the despicable engines of civil tyranny! will be long endured in connexion with that spotless and simple principle, which abhors all secular and carnal contact.

Non tamen ullā magis præsens fortuna laborum est,
Quam si quis potuit ferro rescindere summum

Ulceris

Ulceris os: alitur vitium, vivitque tegendo,
 Dum medicas adhibere manus ad vulnera pastor
 Abnegat, aut meliora deos sedet omina poscens.

Such antichristian phantoms, I have no doubt, will soon vanish, like the beasts of darkness, before the piercing beams of Liberty and Science. *The night is far spent: the day is at hand:* (Rom. xiii. 12.) *The Lord will presently consume these dark iniquities, this delusion, and these lies of Satan, with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy them with the brightness of his coming:* (2 Theff. ii. 7—12.) In the mean time, however, if these men trouble us, and pervert the gospel of Christ; if they preach any other gospel, than that delivered in the scriptures; if they teach, for doctrines, the commandments of men;—an authority, paramount and antecedent to all incidental regulations or connexions, commands us to reject them: (Gal. vii. 10. Matt. xv. 9.)

But some passages of the Christian volume are, in relation to this subject of religious domination and persecution, so eminently sublime and beautiful, as to merit distinct recital and ocular exhibition in these pages.

“ Another

“ Another parable put he forth unto them,
 “ saying: the kingdom of heaven is likened
 “ unto a man, which sowed good seed in his
 “ field: but, while men slept, his enemy
 “ came and sowed tares among the wheat,
 “ and went his way. But, when the blade
 “ was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then
 “ appeared the tares also. So the servants of
 “ the householder came and said unto him:
 “ Sir! didst thou not sow good seed in thy
 “ field? Whence then hath it tares? He
 “ said unto them: An enemy hath done this.
 “ The servants said unto him: WILT THOU
 “ THEN, THAT WE GO AND GATHER THEM
 “ UP? But he said: NAY; LEST, WHILE YE
 “ GATHER UP THE TARES, YE ROOT UP
 “ ALSO THE WHEAT WITH THEM. LET
 “ BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HAR-
 “ VEST: and, in the time of harvest, I will say
 “ to the reapers, gather ye together first the
 “ tares, and bind them in bundles to burn
 “ them; but gather the wheat into my barn:”
 (Matt. xiii. 24—31.)

You see here, Sir! a dictate of consummate wisdom, transcribed, to prevent misap-

prehension and disregard, as it were, with a sun-beam ; a most engaging piece of parabolic history, prohibitory of all interposition with the moral and religious sentiments of individuals ; sentiments, not cognizable indeed at the bar of a human judicature :—a precept, directly levelled against intolerant churchmen and despotic legislators, who blend penalties, restrictions, punishments, civil disabilities, or secular interferences of any kind, with the spiritual interests of the Gospel.

We are here presented with a divine prescription, which neither dulness can misinterpret, sophistry confound, nor artifice evade. But, “ No ;” says the church of England, with all the hierarchical insolence of Papal domination : “ You cannot learn the Gospel
 “ from the scriptures only ; you must not expect to find it *there*. I will tell you where
 “ pure Christianity is to be found in it’s perfection ; namely, in my *articles* and *canons* :
 “ and, if you want a most perspicuous interpretation of them, you must have recourse
 “ by all means to that goodly manual and
 “ most pregnant epitome of sound doctrine,
 E “ the

“ the ATHANASIAN CREED !!! Moreover,
 “ if your obstinacy and stupidity be so de-
 “ plorably incurable, as to refuse acceptance
 “ of all these incomprehensible blessings at
 “ my hands, and hesitate at the verity of their
 “ contents also, you shall not only, WITHOUT
 “ DOUBT, PERISH EVERLASTINGLY, (which
 “ is a trifle) but be debarred from all the
 “ *good things* of Church and State; all those
 “ *fat sops*, that are reserved for such obedi-
 “ ent children, as love me, and the adminis-
 “ tration for the time being, in sincerity.”

Another passage of the New Testament,
 not less admirable and impressive, occurs in
 the Acts of the Apostles, chap. v. ver. 34—
 41. which it were unpardonable to suppress
 or abridge; replete as it is with singular mag-
 nanimity and intrinsic wisdom.

“ Then stood there up one in the council,
 “ a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the
 “ law, had in reputation among all the peo-
 “ ple; and commanded to put the Apostles
 “ forth a little space, and said unto them:
 “ Ye men of Israel! take heed to yourselves
 “ what

“ what ye intend to do as touching these men.
 “ For before these days rose up Theudas,
 “ boasting himself to be somebody ; to whom
 “ a number of men, about four hundred,
 “ joined themselves : who was slain, and all,
 “ as many as obeyed him, were scattered,
 “ and brought to nought.

“ After this man rose up Judas of Galilee,
 “ in the days of the taxing ; and drew away
 “ much people after him. He also perished ;
 “ and all, even as many as obeyed him, were
 “ dispersed.

“ And now I say unto you, REFRAIN FROM
 “ THESE MEN, AND LET THEM ALONE :
 “ for, if this counsel, or this work, be of
 “ men, it will come to nought ; but, if it
 “ be of God, ye cannot overthrow it : lest
 “ haply ye be found to fight even against
 “ God. And to him they agreed.”

Can you tell me, Sir ! what ever exceeded,
 for manly candour, for judicious discrimina-
 tion, for plain unsophisticated sense, this ad-
 vice of the Jewish doctor ? The collective
 annals of human intellect and genius have

not registered a transaction, more declaratory of honest intention, more honourable to our species, than that before us. Such, indeed, will ever be the uniform language of ingenuous men, warped by no selfish considerations, conscious of a rectitude of purpose, and engaged in the conscientious support of a righteous system. *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be convicted: but he, that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God: (John iii. 20, 21.)*

ΚΛΕΙΠΤΩΝ ΓΑΡ ἡ νύξ, τῆς δ' ἀληθείας τὸ φῶς.

THIEVES court the night, but Truth defies the sun.

Now the decisions of modern *Judges* and *Attornies-General* would be couched, I trow, in language very dissimilar to that of the Israelitish sage; and something, perhaps, like the following gracious expostulation:

“Culprit! we would have you to understand, that our government, of which we are the disinterested servants, is an absolutely good government; and we will not suffer any man to speculate upon it, nor indulge

“dulge him in the vain hope of mending
 “what the *wisdom of parliament* has so often
 “declared to be, actual Perfection. *We* know
 “it to be so; the gross and ignorant multi-
 “tude are no judges of such questions. Sir!
 “you have been guilty of an unpardonable
 “offence in discussing these mysteries in what
 “you call a rational way, and truly! in en-
 “deavouring to mislead your countrymen,
 “amidst the enjoyment of *unknown* happi-
 “ness and prosperity. This species of out-
 “rage and profanation, Sir! must not be
 “endured with impunity. Sir! to be brief
 “with you, we will illuminate your under-
 “standing, and confer true benefit on the
 “community, by giving you full opportu-
 “nity of meditating more maturely on this
 “subject, by a *fourteen years’ slavery* among
 “thieves and cut-throats at *Botany Bay*.”

Even the *public orator*, at Cambridge, and
 that *arch-hypocrite*, your fellow-traveller, Mr.
 Wilberforce! will not deny this process to
 be a most efficacious method of conviction and
 reformation; extremely proper to be adopted
 in the *existing circumstances* by a *regular go-*
vernment, under the prosperous auspices of our
 imma-

immaculate and heaven-born prime-minister ! who, happily for his own country and mankind ! has long disabused himself of those silly notions of reformation, which once deluded the immaturity of his understanding !

6. But to proceed, and conclude this division of my subject, by the most important of all topics in the present crisis of affairs. The CHRISTIAN RELIGION then, I say, is a system of EQUALITY, in the most rigorous and general acceptation of that term. It is vain to palliate, as it is impossible to deny, in my opinion, this inevitable and plain conclusion. That universality and diffusion of benevolence, which teach the votaries of the Gospel to embrace collective man with the arms of brotherly affection, is incompatible with every species of hereditary political distinction ; is irreconcilable with every degree of aristocratical superiority. The selfishness, the intolerance, the peculiar depravity, more or less inseparable, through the unalterable connexion of cause and effect, even from the most gentle and amiable natures ; these fruits of educational singularities in Nobility, generally speaking, can no more unite with the meek, unassuming,

9

and

and associating qualities of evangelic love, than the heterogeneous materials of the prophetic image, (Dan. ii. 43.) the *iron* and the *clay*, could incorporate with each other. I am simply adverting here to the universal and undeniable tendencies of things; nor would I be understood to suppose, that the most sublime virtues and most endearing benevolent affections may not be found in exalted ranks. I assert merely, that the education of this class, their early habits, and modes of life, are a grievous stumbling-block in their way; and must impede in some degree the freedom of their progress in running the race of Virtue and Immortality. Sure I am, that a day will come, and is even now at the door of some European nations, when the clouds of vulgar superstition and the mists of infantile prejudice, that encumber the atmosphere of social life, and intercept our intellectual prospects, will be purged from our horizon; when a clear sky will shed its unfulled splendors and benign influences on the human race:

circumfusa repente
Scindit se nubes, et in æthera purgat apertum.

Then such monstrous solecisms in religion
and

and reason, as established churches, hereditary distinctions and immunities, &c. &c. will only exist in the records of history, as awful monuments of the wickedness, infatuation, and calamities of mankind.

But observe, Sir! with what earnestness and pathos, the lessons of humility, of reciprocal service, of the kindest condescension, of undistinguishing philanthropy, are inculcated on his disciples by the benevolent Saviour of the world; who displayed in his own person an example, modest and meek, utterly subversive of all usurped domination and transmitted privilege,

“ And there was also a strife among his
 “ disciples, which of them should be account-
 “ ed the greatest. But Jesus said unto them :
 “ Ye know, that the kings of the Gentiles
 “ exercise lordship over them; and they that
 “ are great, exercise authority upon them.
 “ But it shall not be so among you; but,
 “ whosoever will be great among you, let him
 “ be your minister; and, whosoever will be
 “ chief among you, let him be your servant.
 “ Even as the Son of Man came not to be
 “ ministered

“ ministered unto, but to minister ; and to
 “ give his life a ransom for many : ” (Matt.
 xx. 25—29. Luke xxii. 24—28.)

Impartiality, however, and a love for the true principles of fair criticism, call upon me to declare, that the latter sentence is exhibited with a very material transposition of phrase, and variety of readings, in some MS copies of the New Testament, belonging to the Imperial library at Vienna, and other royal repositories, that might be mentioned, if a scrupulous detail of such minutiae were expedient on this occasion :

In western clime there is a town,
 To those that dwell therein well known;
 Therefore, there needs no more be said here :
 We unto them refer our reader,
 For brevity is very good,
 When w' are, or are not, understood.

Indeed, the variations here spoken of are delineated in *red* ink ; which betrays the hand of a modern interpolator ; and stand as follows :

“ Even as the *kings* of *the isles* came not to
 “ minister, but to be ministered unto ; and to
 F “ give

“ give *the* life of many *myriads* a ransom for
 “ *their own pleasure*.”

Sir ! I leave you, and your ministerial partisans, to balance the respective excellence of these readings, to settle these curious aberrations of slumbering transcribers, and to point out the sources of their mistake :

Non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites.

Again : — “ So, after Jesus had washed
 “ their feet, and had taken his garments, and
 “ was set down again, he said unto them :
 “ Know ye, what I have done unto you ? Ye
 “ call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ;
 “ for so I am. If I then, your Lord and
 “ Master, have washed your feet, ye also
 “ ought to wash one another’s feet. For I
 “ have given you an example, that ye should
 “ do as I have done to you. Verily, verily,
 “ I say unto you, The servant is not greater
 “ than his lord ; neither he, that is sent,
 “ greater than he that sent him. If ye know
 “ these things, happy are ye, if ye do them : ”
 (John, xiii. 12 — 18.)

But I shall not multiply quotations in support

port of a proposition, loudly proclaimed and indubitably demonstrated, by every action of our Saviour's life, and every precept of his tongue. I say then, that the pure spirit of the Gospel, operative through the whole mass of the creation, is the life of every man alike ; that it should pervade every professor, from *the beggar on the dunghill*, (1 Sam. ii. 8.) to the monarch *that sitteth on his throne* : (Exod. xi. 5.) It is altogether frivolous and inapplicable, or universally and undistinguishably pertinent : it is nothing, or the most important of all things possible.

II. I am now arrived, Sir ! at the concluding division of my subject ; of less general moment and application, it is true ; but, beyond all controversy, of no inconsiderable importance to yourself. You will be weighed in my balance, and be found wanting. That balance, indeed, is not the *even* and unerring *balance* (Job, xxxi. 6.) of the sanctuary ; but the balance of a weak and fallible fellow-creature : of one, however, who has watched some days and some nights in the investigation of scripture truth, and has sacrificed many a hecatomb of social comfort and secular emo-

lument on her altar : whose judgement, therefore, has some authority, and is entitled to some respect. I believe you from my soul to be well-intentioned, unassuming, and uninfluenced by worldly motives ; but under the dominion of superstitious and puerile prepossessions. I have frequently stood forth as your apologist, in opposition to those harsher adversaries, who could find no solution of your strange political demeanor, but in depravity of heart : a supposition, which in all cases, where no sinister views are visible, forces itself with extreme reluctance on my breast. No : your ingenuous nature has been abused by artful profligates ; who, destitute of worth themselves, have been eager to prostitute your virtues and reputation for the support of their interest or popularity. I believe you to be actuated, like the Israëlites of the apostle's days, with *a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge* : (Rom. x. 2.) You are exempt too, I hope and would willingly persuade myself, from that overweening influence of fanatical impressions, which, under the specious semblance of humility and self-annihilation, inflates, with a most dangerous infusion of sanctimonious contemptuousness and Pharisaic pride,

pride, that class of Christians, among which you are ranked.

1. To proceed, therefore, in my plan.— You will recollect, Sir! that the volume, which we so justly love,—those *holy scriptures, that are able to make us wise unto salvation*, (2 Tim. iii. 15.) has furnished it's readers with a touch-stone, at which we may try our faith, whether it be adulterate, or pure. The words of our Lord's favourite disciple will possibly recur to memory on this occasion: *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*: (John, vii. 17.) Concerning your own knowledge of this doctrine, with respect to your own soundness in the faith, few scruples, I dare say, have broken in of late years upon the tranquillity of your acquiescence. Your fellow traveller, to whom I have before alluded in these pages, whose foul hypocrisy and dark malignity, though unsuspected by yourself, are *practically* known to me; that impostor, I say, has contributed to confirm you in a gloomy system of evangelical fanaticism, which he derides as much as any man in theory, and contemns openly and avowedly, beyond all others, in
his

his conduct. The remarks, Sir ! which I am proceeding to subjoin, will assist your determination with respect to the rectitude of your religious creed, infinitely better than the suggestions of that subtle sycophant and deceiver, on the principles of my unexceptionable authority just quoted from the book of life.

2. In relation to your private character and social manners, I have had no opportunities of experimental knowledge. I feel myself, however, entirely disposed to believe it as irreproachable and praise-worthy, as the egregious puerility of your religious fancies will allow. Your public character alone, abundantly conspicuous from the elevation of your position to the whole community, will constitute the basis of my enquiries and conclusions ; and this is so strongly marked by actions of most decisive quality, as to admit, I should suppose, on a full and fair statement, no possible diversity of sentence with rational and dispassionate enquirers.

In one word, Sir ! to launch at once into the middle of my subject, you stand impeached at the bar of Religion, Reason, and Humanity,
of

of that high crime and misdemeanour, — a long, and uniform, and ardent support, in your political capacity, of WILLIAM PITT. Here pause a moment, I beseech you! *you*, who love the Gospel; you, who glory in a crucified Redeemer! Endeavour to frame, before we proceed, some conception of the direful pregnancy, the prodigious comprehensiveness, of that short and simple proposition. — You will *obtain mercy*, I trust; *because* you have acted *ignorantly, in unbelief*: (1 Tim. i. 13.) You are not, you cannot be, perfectly aware, I am persuaded, of the immeasurable enormities comprised in that zealous and powerful cooperation with such a minister.

Adspice: namque omnem, quæ nunc, obducta tuenti,
Mortales hebetat visus tibi, et humida circum
Caligat, nubem eripiam.

Turn your eyes hitherward, whilst I develop the horrid texture of extreme wickedness and unparalleled calamity: — contemplate, if you can, with a calm survey, the frightful spectacle: trace the black embroidery, and the thick characters of hell, that are exhibited in such sanguine colours and with such awful portraiture, on the ample bosom of it's folds and drapery.

Quanquam animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit,
Incipiam.

3. *You* well remember, Mr. Wilberforce ! that this WILLIAM PITT, who has lost *his* memory, profest himself, at the commencement of his parliamentary career, an advocate for reform in the representation of the people ; as the only radical cure, that could be devised, for the multifarious and flagrant corruptions of our government. His words, I am informed, are tantamount to the following declaration ; or, in truth, accurately the same with these :
“ Without a reformation in Parliament, nei-
“ ther the liberty of the subject can be pre-
“ served, nor can we expect to have a wise,
“ virtuous, or disinterested administration.”

“ Well !” you would reply : “ my friend
“ continues in this sentiment : he is still an
“ advocate for reformation in the represen-
“ tative body of this kingdom.” Observe then, Sir ! I entreat you, to what alternative by this fond credulity you are reduced. You must either accept with implicit acquiescence the unsupported assertion of the stripling statesman, or obstinately resist the clearest demon-

demonstrations of undisputed fact in the maturity of his public life.

During his administration, this man has created, including his reverend progeny of prelates and the exaltations of inferior nobility to higher titles, nearly one half, I believe, of the peerage of this realm.—Mark this diligently: and cease to wonder, that *Sir Brook Boothby* has stiled our present house of lords, “*new creatures of the minister, and old valets of the king*; courtly lawyers, and a courtly hierarchy.”

Further.—It is most notorious, and what no effrontery, I think, can gainsay, that the representatives of the people during the same period have numbered amongst them in large proportion a description of men, more immediately and essentially under the influence of the minister from their mercantile character, incomparably beyond the example of any former period that can be specified. With reason, therefore, has the same elegant, but satiric, pen, characterised this *honourable assembly*, as composed “of placemen, pensioners, hungry expectants, India delinquents,

“ quents, and every other description of ministerial dependants ; kennelled like hounds, and crouching for employment : representatives, representing nothing but their own personal interest.”

It were a superfluous scrupulosity to extend our researches further in prosecution of the point in question. Detestable surely must be that audacity, which refuses to acknowledge, deplorable that sottishness, which is unable to perceive, — the absolute irreconcilability of such a conduct with such professions. No, Sir ! This was the lure holden out by a young grey-beard in imposture to entrap popular simplicity ; a simplicity, irrationally seduced by boastful promises, superficial loquacity, and a precipitate presumption of hereditary virtues. The public attachment was secured, even to an excess of enthusiastic fondness and admiration. His disinterested partisans, however, have been long disenchanted of their fond delirium ; they have been sobered for many years from the intoxicating fumes of his magic cup : but alas !

Nil tibi legatum præter plorare, suisque :

unavailing

unavailing remorse is their only consolation now ; and the bitterness of self-condemnation, too justly merited by such groundless and immoderate credulity ! is their sole reward. *Reformation* is erased for ever from the tablet ; and *Revolution* is written in it's place. *Dabit Deus his quoque finem.*

For my own part, whether from a singular propensity of penetration into human character with some success, or from superior opportunities of experimental observation, I never found myself at any period of my life mistaken in my judgement of that man. His disdainful aspect, and supercilious demeanor, when a contemporary youth at Cambridge ; the self-opiniated dictatorial complexion of his first speeches in public life ; the prematurity of his oratorical exhibitions ;—all these striking peculiarities were sufficient indications, to my mind at least, that “ all was false and “ hollow ;” a gaudy structure, destitute of foundation and stability ; the blossoms of wisdom and of virtue, without the root : and, *because they had no root, they are withered away.*

Quasi solstitialis herba, paullisper fuit :
Repente exortus est, repentino occidit.

Ye sons of Cam ! in whose hearts this golden idol (but a mere wooden log to me) has been long set up and worshipped ; your eyes have often seen a fit emblem of this object of your profane adoration on the bosom of that *wizard stream*, which washes the hallowed feet of our *Alma Mater* !

(O ! name for ever sad, for ever dear !)

Your eyes have noticed a plant, expanding it's broad foliage and stately flower on the surface of the waters ; but have found, on closer inspection, that “ the stem, by which it receives “ nourishment and support, was slender as a “ thread.”

This, Sir ! is the man, the grand exemplar of systematical corruption, and the sworn foe to all reformation whatsoever ; —

————— quantum mutatus ab illo

Hectore !

whose measures you have promoted with cordial concurrence, with a confidence unlimited, and with all the influence of your reputation, amidst an inconsistency of conduct, to which it seems impossible for any intellect above the mere imbecillity of idiotism to have been the dupe : you have admired, loved, and
revered

revered this minister, with *the mark of the beast*, with all the unequivocal characters of apostasy and perfidy, deeply engraven *on his forehead*. But this, I suppose, is one of *your* extraordinary methods of

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

4. You proved yourself the staunch coadjutor of this incomparable guardian of our liberties, civil and religious, in his opposition to a repeal of the *Test-laws* and penal statutes in behalf of the Protestant-dissenters from the Church establishment. When the delegates from that body waited on the minister with an explanation of their intended proposition to Parliament, and a solicitation of his patronage, this *complicated monster*, this *Amphisbæna dire*, left an impression upon them at their first interview, significant of an intended patronage of their petition. There is no misrepresentation, Sir! no exaggeration in this statement. My informants are the eye and ear witnesses of this transaction. Whether he were sincere at that time, and were afterwards diverted from his purpose by motives of interest and ambition; or even then were directed by the
domi-

domineering influence of his habitual duplicity ; I take not upon me to decide. The fact only is incontestable : that his subsequent exertions on this question were diametrically opposed to previous expectation, excited by his looks, and words, and demeanour, in men not likely to deceive themselves, and incapable of deceiving others.

You likewise, Mr. Wilberforce ! seemed originally inclined to favour these petitioners, before the engine of priestcraft and political cajolery had been played on your simplicity ; but you speedily recovered your steps from this incidental deviation into rectitude. You are conscious, that what I am going to affirm, is truth. You, good creature ! dutiful son of orthodoxy ! pious nursling of our dear Mother-Church ! you were smitten forsooth ! with a holy compunction of spirit, lest the repeal of these laws, and the consequent removal of civil disabilities, should prove ultimately prejudicial to the interests of the hierarchical establishment in these kingdoms, and upset the *thirty-nine* articles of our faith ! Your understanding was seized, I must presume, with a momentary oblivion of a most emphatical

tical passage in our Scriptures, or your theological preceptors, it is possible, had neglected the proper interpretation of it. Suffer me to recall the words to your remembrance, and to accompany them with a few notes of illustration, as we pass.

“ And *Jesus* said unto *his disciples*: But
 “ whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter
 “ answered, and said: Thou art the Christ,
 “ the son of the living God. And Jesus an-
 “ swered, and said unto him: Blessed art thou,
 “ Simon Bar-Jona! for flesh and blood hath
 “ not revealed it unto thee, but my Father
 “ which is in heaven. And I say also unto
 “ thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this
 “ rock I will build my Church; and the
 “ gates of hell shall not prevail against it:”
 (Matt. xvi. 15—19.)

Now observe, Sir! what important fundamental principles of Christianity are enveloped in this short dialogue between our Master and his apostle. You cannot employ with a greater prospect of edification a few moments of your time, than by concentrating
 9 your

your attention to an evolution of these principles.

We are here taught, upon no less evidence than the declaration of our Lord himself, 1. that the badge of communion with the Gospel is a simple acknowledgement, that *Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God*: or, in other words, that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, delegated by God for the redemption of mankind from ignorance, and sin, and death.

Now, Sir! I demand of you, I demand of the whole priesthood and prelacy of this land, by what authority ye presume to superinduce other conditions of Christian fellowship upon this single postulatam of our Saviour? On what plea of reason ye dare deprive any man of the unalienable birthright of equal citizenship, because he refuses acceptance of your forgeries and impositions; your creeds, your articles, your canons, and summaries of faith? Who commissioned this self-created dictator in spiritual concerns, this *man of sin*, this *son of perdition*, thus to lord it over God's heritage; — thus, by such impious *exaltation* of his power,

power, to claim a divine prerogative, and usurp a throne even *in the temple of God* himself? (2 Theff. ii. 3. 4. 1 Pet. v. 3.) But possibly this rebellion against the supreme legislation of Jehovah, and the supremacy of Christ in his own kingdom, may be another of *your* modes of

LOOKING UNTO JESUS !

2. You may remark further from this passage, so pregnant with Gospel truth ! that the revelation of genuine Christianity, and its profession in simplicity and purity, are detached from all intercourse with *flesh and blood* : that is, human principles, worldly motives, civil power, temporal policy, are as dissonant from the spirituality of our religion, as unconnected with that vital operation of intrinsic agency, as unaccording with those invisible influences of the intellect and heart, — as *light with darkness*; as *Christ with Belial* : (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.)

God never made his work for man to mend.

Your ecclesiastical institutions, Sir ! are in reality an abomination in contrast with the

H

Gospel :

Gospel : they are the most prominent feature in that antichristian tyranny, on which the word of prophecy has denounced most exemplary vengeance : a vengeance, that is now at length awaking from it's *slumber*, (2 Pet. ii. 3.) and rousing it's energies into action. The victims, indeed, after the usual procedure in great national judgements, enjoy themselves with heedless security, as in a perfect calm : like the antediluvian generation of Noah's day, " they eat, they drink, they buy, they sell, they plant, they build : " (Luke, xvii. 28.) they continue their career of prodigality, and insolence, of venality, and cruel persecution, in league with their state-ally, though a dreadful specimen of similar infatuation, so recently exhibited in a neighbouring country, is staring them in the face.

But that too-handed engine at the door

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

3. Finally, Sir ! Christ has advertised us in this passage, of the permanency of his Church, founded on that adamantine profession of his Messiahship : *The gates of hell* (or rather, of the *grave* ; i. e. mortality and destruction) *shall not prevail against it.*

Go

Go now, and suppose this mighty fabric, *whose contriver and builder is God Omnipotent*; (Heb. xi. 10.) whose foundations repose on the immutability of Truth, whose compartments are coextensive with the globe, whose battlements transcend the skies;—go now, and imagine this vast edifice tottering from its center by the assaults of non-conformists and unbelievers: call loudly for your Church and her rotten props; summon your minister and bishops to put out their fingers; before it lie prostrate in the dust!

I cannot excuse this species of folly, Sir! in you, who have devoted yourself to heavenly meditation and a painful study of the scriptures. *Mr. Pitt's* conduct in this respect is susceptible of much more palpable extenuation. Spiritual musings and *sober love-feasts* form no part of his enjoyments and occupations. *Gallio careth for none of these things*: (Acts, xviii. 17.) I could readily prevail upon myself, if all else were well, to obliterate, with the rasure of forgetfulness, this transgression from the long and crowded catalogue of his offences. Compared with his other crimes, this hostility to an equal participation of religious

H 2

privileges

privileges is no more than one barren spot in a wide and dreary wilderness : a mere volcanic eruption amidst the conflagration of the universe !

5. We are now ascending a much higher step on the ladder of political atrocities ; to which I shall raise you, Sir ! from the vantage-ground of a few preliminary observations.

TRUTH, Sir ! is the most meritorious pursuit, the noblest acquisition, of an intellectual and moral creature. To this purpose is that fine remark of Plutarch : Ουθεν ανθρωπω λαβειν μειζον, ου χαριζεσθαι Θεω σεμνοτερον, αληθειας : “ Man can receive no gift of greater worth, “ God can bestow none more venerable, than “ TRUTH.” But how, Sir ! is *Truth* to be discovered, whether evangelical, moral, philosophical, or political, but by diligent and unrestrained investigation, by the full and free application of human intellect ? Tell me, then ; Is not that man a rebel against Reason, and Truth, and God ; are not those laws, I do not say, absurd and wicked, but absolutely void, and incapable of observance without an actual profanation of the divine will ; — which

presume

presume to circumscribe, or fetter, much more to destroy and *punish*, this fundamental criterion of rationality — this first duty of intellectual existence?

———— cunctis undamque, auramque, patentem.

This, however, is a thread-bare topic ; and I hasten to my application of it. I shall, therefore, but just stay to mention the *fruitlessness* of such impotent restrictions ; or rather their direct tendency to promote the purpose which they are endeavouring to impede. The rays of knowledge may indeed be partially intercepted for a time, and broken, by the obliquity of legal interposition ; but the parent luminary still pursues, unretarded, his progress through the skies, to invigorate and illumine universal Nature.

Now permit me, Sir ! to direct your attention towards the illustrious achievements of your hero in this department of transgression.

1. The freedom of public discussion has been abridged by sanguinary statutes virtually incompatible with the verbal compact between the subjects and their *servant* (Rom. xiii. 3.)
the

the chief magistrate of this realm, the *creature* (ανθρωπῶν κτίσει, (1 Pet. ii. 13.) of our hands : a compact, ratified by a public and solemn oath at the time of his investiture with his office.

2. Many of our fellow-citizens have been punished by severe fines, by long and cruel imprisonments, by banishment to the extremities of the earth, under very trying circumstances of calamity, by a sudden transition from the liberal enjoyments of a literary life to dark loathsome dungeons, — to disease, and chains, and famine : their spotless fame has been exposed to the slanders and obloquy of their countrymen from false calumnies, pretended plots, and unsubstantiated accusations of regal murder : they have been tried for their lives, and impeached of the blackest political crimes, under the impressions of strong public prejudice ; and, when pronounced innocent by their peers, in spite of all the machinations of diabolical malice and the foul exertions of mercenary lawyers in this work of blood, they have been dismissed, after a tedious imprisonment and exorbitant expences, from the iniquities of office, without the smallest reparation for these

these flagrant injuries, on the part of their unrelenting persecutors.

These are but gleanings from a full harvest, a small selection from the multitudinous exploits of that grand national impostor, WILLIAM PITT ! These, Sir ! are a specimen of his infernal manœuvres against some of the most valuable and accomplished members in society, FOR TREADING IN HIS OWN STEPS ! (observe this, *Mr. Wilberforce* :) for attempting the *same reformation* of abuses by the *same means* ; namely, by a melioration of the representative body in the Commons' house of Parliament : an object which raised himself to power and popularity.—Such have hitherto been the contrary fortunes of these reformers !

Ille crucem sceleris pretium tulit, hic diadema.

Now, Sir ! in this monstrous mass of guilt unparalleled, you, as his abettor, and accessory, are entitled to some share ; nay, must in reason be deemed a principal participant. The patronage, and support, of such men as you, has enabled this child of perdition to run with impunity and success his long race of hardened

ed

ed apostasy and savage persecution. Yet you still adhere to your associate ! You still repose upon his humanity and virtues an unreserved confidence ! And this, peradventure, is *your* third method of

LOOKING UNTO JESUS !

6. Finally, Sir ! you have seconded, justified, and encouraged our wordy warrior, in that most tremendous of all measures, *the war with France*: a war, originally projected upon fictitious and absurd pretences, against every dictate of religion, of reason, and sound policy ; prosecuted with barbarian ferocity, amidst the perpetual admonitions of miscarriage, and the unceasing expostulations of the wise and good ; accompanied with a complication of calamity and a devastation of the human species, prodigious beyond all examples in the records of mortality, since the first revolution of the sun. Even *your* guilt, Sir ! as an approver only and subordinate promoter of this most nefarious of possible undertakings, is great and terrible indeed ! I am sure, for my own part, that I would not exchange conditions with you, under the circumstance of that
horrid

horrid crime, unrepented and unannealed by remorse and reparation, for all the honours and riches, that kings and ministers could bestow. Yet this, it is possible, may be another of *your* ways of

LOOKING UNTO JESUS !

But your friend engaged in this war, truly, in behalf of *Religion, Humanity, and regular Governments!*

1. By the pretence of this motive of *religion*, it should seem, that your copy of the Gospels prescribes, as an admirable specific for reforming the manners of the world, and as the true medium of *doing God service*, (John, xvi. 2.) the cutting of men's throats by a band of ruffian mercenaries trained for the purpose, and legalized to the trade of slaughter!—By this too we may be led to conclude, that the *Jesus*, to whom you look, came into the world, *not to save men's lives, but to DESTROY them*: (Luke, ix. 56.) By this, in short, we might reasonably presume, from the piety and sanctity of your doctrines and your life, that a trivial monosyllable has slipped, from the carelessness of copyists, out

I

of

of one commandment in the decalogue, as exhibited in *your* Bible, where you have been accustomed to read thus :

THOU SHALT COMMIT MURDER !

2. In the next place, the interests of *humanity*, beyond all controversy, are admirably forwarded and secured by the conversion of men into something much worse than *brutes* :—

Indica tigris agit rabidâ cum tigride pacem
Perpetuam ; sævis inter se convenit urfis :—

into *fiends* and *devils*, gorged with the flesh and blood of their fellow-men. But, what is the guilt of the poor ignorant hungry offenders, compared with that of those *sinner*s, their employers and instigators ; of *whom* YOU are CHIEF ? (1 Tim. i. 15.) Not much more, in a fair estimate, than that of the passive bayonet, to the hand which thrusts it to the heart.—

Oh ! Sir ! are not the words of Peter too applicable to conduct such as your's ? *Thou hast neither part, nor lot, in this matter ; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness ; and pray God,*

God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee : for I perceive, that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity : (Acts, viii. 21 — 24.)

Surely the rankest *heathenism* is incomparably preferable to such a base species of *Christianity* as this.

3. And beyond all peradventure, politician **PITT!** and Rabbi **WILBERFORCE!** *regular government* is admirably consulted by the propagation of alarms and terrors, by the fabrication of plots and treasons, by the fomentation of suspicion and malevolence ; *by setting a man at variance against his father, and transforming his own household into his greatest foes ; (Matt. x. 35, 36.)* by arming the more profligate portion of society *with swords and staves* against the other. We may venture to mix also in this never-failing *recipe*, this perfect *panacea*, for social *regularity* and national *composure*, a few lighter ingredients, such as taxes, bankruptcies, a scarcity of corn, and such an exorbitant increase in the expence of common necessaries, as render a decent maintenance of ourselves and families in the lower orders

of life extremely difficult, and almost impracticable. But this accumulation of anxiety and distress, these scenes of misery, derived purely from the profligacy of our rulers, in lieu of a prosperity, never equalled by any nation under heaven, within our reach, may be possibly one of the religious consequences, Sir! that result from *your* singular mode of

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

4. But lastly, that I may not bewilder myself with a theme of inexhaustible calamity, to the prime actors in which, (you, I mean, *Mr. Wilberforce!* with your friend Moloch, and his assessors, —

——— horrid crew! besmear'd with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears;)

no bitterness of invective, in my conscientious opinion, can possibly do justice; — whose villainies and cruelty transcend in their effects, on a fair comparison of the respective cases, all that fable has transmitted, all that history records, of the most merciless savages of antiquity: — to avoid bewilderment, I say, amidst such a multiplicity of topics, I shall only solicit

cit

cit your attention to one consideration more, and then dismiss you to your beads and prayer-book, to divide with your favourite minister on questions of persecution, tyranny, and bloodshed; with a few farewell reflections, and a short lesson of advice.

Your heaven-born friend, amongst the number of his pious meditations on the means of restoring a *regular government* to France, happily devised the god-like scheme of subduing the inhabitants of that populous empire to religion, humanity, and laws, by the summary discipline of FAMINE. Gracious parent of the universe! who *givest to the beast his food, and feedest the young ravens, when they cry*; (Psalm, cxlvii. 9.) who *openest thy hand, and all thy creatures are filled with good*; (civ. 28.) who art *kind to the unthankful, and the evil*; (Luke, vi. 35.) who *makest thy sun to rise on the wicked and on the good, and sendest rain on the just and on the unjust*; (Matt. v. 45.) who hast expressly commanded us, by the mouth of thy dear Son, *to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for our despiteful persecutors*, (ver. 43, 44.) that we may merit the endearing appella-

appellation of thy *children* :—were it previously conceivable, that beings in the shape of man, with the same life-current circulating in their veins, heirs to the same infirmities of the flesh, and joint-partakers of human feelings and affections—could calmly contrive, deliberately pursue, and audaciously avow, this scheme of pre-eminent atrocity; a scheme, that beggars all capacities of language, and sets every power of calculation at defiance?—In this guilt also, you, Mr. Wilberforce! have made yourself, by silent acquiescence and subsequent support of the horrid perpetrators, a detestable associate. *Guilt*, did I say? This may be, on the contrary, with *you*, for aught I can discover, some peculiarly edifying mode of

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

And now, Sir! let me take the liberty of proposing a simple question for your solution:—Upon a review of the preceding picture of your compeers, coloured from the life with the pencil of disinterested truth, will you prefer *loyal Christian Englishmen*, of the described complexion, to the people so extravagantly reviled by them, I mean *rebellious*

French

French atheists ; or not ? Suppose we assist our decision on this point by descending from general competition to a specific instance. Whether of the twain, for example, do you most approve and reverence ; *Buonaparte*, (late the fond object of my solicitude day and night ;

————— πολλὰς μὲν αὔπνους νυκτὰς ἰαυόν,
 Ἡμάτα δ' αἵματοεντα' —————

but now, with his unrivalled companions of the war, my consolation and my triumph !) BUONAPARTE, I say, or EDMUND BURKE ? The one, a prodigy beyond compare in eloquence and genius ; but a fiend in malignity, and insatiable of human blood ;

Shutting the gates of mercy on mankind :

the other, in the very midst of victories, which eclipse even the achievements of that unrivalled Carthaginian, preferring one civic crown, for the preservation of a single citizen from death, to the melancholy glory, that could result from a thousand triumphs of a conqueror, wading through floods of slaughter to his reward !

Are we, Sir ! in the place of God to scrutinize the *bidden man of the heart*, and to decide

on principles, where no public profession of them has been uttered? No: the external act, by which alone society can be benefited or impaired, is in most cases the only standard whereby our determinations on character must be regulated. Your faith and mine, on what I deem the fundamental points of revelation, is probably not very different: but I can suggest to my own mind a variety of exculpatory reasons, in heedlessness, fashionable levity, secular dissipation, an immoderate conceit of superior discernment, neglect of adequate information and laborious enquiry, a perpetual exposure of gross depravity and puerile superstition in professing Christians, with other obstacles and discouragements, as sources of the unbelieving propensities of the present day. *Shew me thy faith by thy works*; (James, ii. 18.) and I am satisfied: I want no more. *Godwin's Political Justice* I read with pleasure and improvement; with admiration of the philosophical composure, the temperate but vigorous ratiocination, the perspicuous energetic style, the clear discernment, and the unreserved investigation, of the author.—I differ, perhaps, in many points; but I confess, that I love such men, and wish ardently that they

were

were not only *almost*, but *altogether*, such as I myself am: (Acts, xxvi. 29.) *Qui tales sunt, utinam essent nostri!* When, on the other hand, I take up your publication, my predominant feelings are those of disgust, abhorrence, and indignation. I expect with such principles an exemplary purity of conduct.—I contrast your professions with your life; your faith with your works; the follower of JESUS with the friend and advocate of PITT. And can you wish a more compleat definition of irreconcilable antipathy, than the contents of the last clause; or a more ample vindication of my sensations on the perusal of your book? In fact, Christians, like you, ignorant of *what spirit ye are of*, are a more fruitful source of atheism and infidelity, than all other causes put together; formalists of devout sentiments and sanctified demeanour, but accomplices in enormities shocking to human feelings; *whited sepulchres, beautiful on the outside, but full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness*; (Matt. xxiii. 27.) having a *form of godliness*; but *without the power*; (2 Tim. iii. 5.) *professing, in short, to know God, but in deeds denying him; abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate*: (Tit. i. 16.)

I am aware, Sir ! that all this will be thought exceedingly intemperate and harsh by men of dull sensations and of no zeal even for gospel truth : but, *what I have written, I have written* ; and have exhibited my vouchers for writing thus, from the unerring book of life, in the preceding pages. My words are, in reality, *the words of truth and soberness* ; (Acts, xxvi. 25.) they will stand the test of Reason and the Scriptures ; though Festus, perhaps, and his crew of mercenary parasites, or lukewarm worldlings, may think me *mad*. I shall acknowledge the contents, with the exultation of conscious rectitude, “ in the hour “ of death, and in the day of judgement.” According to my own conceptions of the subject under contemplation, I have assigned “ proper words to their proper places.” If the language be deemed in any respect too harsh and pointed, it must be so deemed with reference only to the feelings of the censurer ; for I could find no adequate image of my own in any other. *Out of the abundance of my heart my mouth hath spoken.* If crimes of the deepest dye under the colour of Christian sanctity can be stigmatised by any terms of reproach more than commensurate to their

deserts,

deserts, I grudge no man the enjoyment of this opinion, but, amidst the invectives of foes, and the remonstrances of friends, continue to retain my own, and silently transfer from myself, on deliberate and deep conviction, the disproportion in this case to some erroneous principle of action in my objectors. The genuine correspondences of words and things, and the reality of moral distinctions, will still subsist, in spite of the prudery, fastidiousness, or mistaken candour of mankind; and will neither be confounded, nor disrespected, with impunity. The practical benefits of my procedure I could illustrate by various examples of notoriety, if required. Thomas Paine, for instance, will answer Bishop Watson's pamphlet, but he will never venture a reply to mine. Wounded pride and conscious profligacy have set their seal upon his tongue.—To have written otherwise, on the present occasion, were to me slavish timidity from selfish motives, a mean treachery to my conviction, an impious rebellion against truth, a sacrilegious indifference to every thing venerable, dear, and sacred; to every thing praiseworthy, and of *good report*.

—————Civis erat, qui libera posset
Verba animi proferre, et vitam impendere vero!

This species of plain-dealing, this application of *sharp rebuke*, recommended in cases of extreme malignancy by the spirited apostle, (Tit. i. 13.) is unpalatable and exceptionable to those alone, whose insipidity of nature leads them to mistake *earnestness* for *passion*; who are influenced by selfish considerations of fame or interest; who are afraid of drawing the attention of an opponent, or the public, to a discussion of their own characters. No supposable case of iniquity can be less ambiguous, than that upon which I have ventured to decide. You know, Sir! who vented his indignation without restraint against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; who, again and again, without a possibility of assurance beyond the demonstration of open fact, pronounced that depraved generation, VIPERS, FOOLS, and HYPOCRITES.

Finally, Sir! be persuaded by me to commence, and this instantly, a serious scrutiny into that religious creed, which you have imbibed from your nurse and *grandmother*: (2Tim. i. 5.) Take my word for it, some
material

material articles of your faith are nothing better than a *profane and old-wives' fable*: (1 Tim. iv. 7.) *Sweet and bitter water* (James, iii. 11.) cannot bubble at the same time from *the same spring*. Apostasy, treachery, venality, rapacity, corruption, persecution, cruelty, military despotism, the destruction of human happiness, a boundless lust of devastation, the deliberate murder of many myriads, and, amidst oceans of blood, an insatiable thirst for more ; — all these things must be laudable in themselves, and pleasing in the sight of God, or your religion, which suffers you to be an accomplice and abettor of these crimes, must be a scheme of impiety and falsehood, entitled only to universal execration, and ripe for vengeance. *Consider of it ; take advice ; and speak your mind*: (Judges, xix. 30.)

With the sincerest desire for your speedy conversion to a sounder Christianity, for an unfeigned repentance, and effectual amendment, I subscribe myself, Sir !

Your hearty well-wisher,

GILBERT WAKEFIELD.

Hackney, May 7th,

1797.

I HAVE taken advantage of a vacant page to annex a character of Mr. Pitt from a late speech of MAJOR CARTWRIGHT to the inhabitants of Boston : nor do I recollect ever to have seen a finer specimen of vigorous and simple eloquence, than this effusion of that invaluable patriot.

“ Of this same *Mr. Pitt* I must take a little more notice. He formerly told you what I now tell you. He told you, it was not safe to trust implicitly in any Minister, or any man ; but in your Constitution, and in your own Rights. In my own hearing, he has eloquently mourned over the decay and corruption in the representative part of our Government, and pathetically described the thousand evils flowing from that source ; quoting his illustrious Father, and other grave and wise Statesmen, as agreeing with him in a belief, that, without a Reform in that particular, there was for this Nation no salvation. To him, perhaps, it was reserved, both to give, and to fulfil, a dreadful prophecy ! With this quondam Reformer, whom I was then disposed to hail as a political Messiah, as the destined Saviour

Saviour of his Country, it was once in particular my fortune to dip in the same dish, and to drink of the same cup, as an humble disciple ; — and to join him in a solemn declaration to the Public, that, ‘ without a Parliamentary Reformation, neither the Liberties of the Nation can be preserved, nor the permanence of a wise and virtuous Administration secured.’ What, then, must be my feelings, when I have lived to see this man a *Judas* — the basest of all apostates — selling his Country to the very Faction whose corruptions he had exposed, for the proud station of Prime Minister ; — building the permanency of his own wicked Administration on *doubly fortifying that Faction in the strong-holds of power* ; and, in cold blood, and, by false accusations, *attempting to take away the lives of men*, whose steady fidelity to the People, and whose perseverance in the cause of Reform, was so great a contrast and reproach to his own treachery !”

